

Innledning på seminar om multilateralisme

Cape Town, 18.5. 2023

Thank you,

Dear participants,

Excellencies, colleagues

All protocol observed.

I also want to thank, Sheila and SAIIA for hosting me tonight.

Thank you for joining us to discuss multilateralism. A topic at the core of Norwegian foreign policy, and of our cooperation with South Africa.

Today's world order is subject to many global challenges:

- War and geopolitical tensions,
- climate change,
- global pandemic,
- food insecurity
- and inequality.

By definition, they pose a threat to all countries. And can only be tackled together.

That is precisely why we have the United Nations – or as the second Secretary General of the UN, Dag Hammarskjöld, said back in the days: “The UN wasn't created to take mankind into paradise, but rather to save humanity from hell”.

The United Nations was born out of crisis. And it should be strengthened in a time where we face increased international tensions.

Fifty years ago, Norwegian diplomats smuggled cash to the ANC – at a time where many of our allies still considered it a terrorist organization. One of the Norwegians who arrived here with cash hidden underneath his suit was Thorvald Stoltenberg. He would later become Norway's foreign minister.

At its core, Norway's relationship with African countries is built on solidarity, the fight for freedom and justice, and against colonialism and apartheid. At that time, some countries said this was an internal issue for South Africa. We refused

to accept that. Because the Universal Declaration of Human Rights doesn't make repression or discrimination internal matters.

These same values are vital for international cooperation at this time of heightened tensions. And that is why Norway wants to maintain our close cooperation with South Africa on multilateral issues.

One example of our partnership is our joint commitment to the meaningful inclusion of women in peace processes.

Another is our excellent collaboration in the joint leadership of the ACT-A facilitation council – a part of the global response to COVID-19.

The new technology transfer hub in South Africa will improve Africa's access to vaccines. I was lucky enough to join Norway's Minister of Development in Cape Town to participate in the hub's launch on April 20th.

The issue of supporting African agency has been part of our foreign policy since the 1960s. In 1973 we hosted the big UN-OAU meeting on liberation of Southern Africa in Oslo.

Norway and South Africa also collaborated closely as elected members of the UN Security Council.

As we entered the Council in early 2021, Foreign Minister Pandor briefed our previous foreign minister on South Africa's experience the two previous years. On the 19th of April our current minister had the chance to reflect on Norway's experience with Foreign Minister Pandor in Pretoria. We also support the AU in building a closer, and more coherent African voice at the UNSC.

Allow me to highlight a few points that would merit further discussions at this seminar.

1. Peace and reconciliation

Norway will continue our efforts in peace diplomacy in regional conflicts, like the Israel-Palestine, Sudan, South-Sudan and Colombia. But we cannot do that without regional partners. One example is Colombia where we have been working closely with Cuba to facilitate negotiations between the FARC guerilla and the government. We work with South Africa and South African actors on a numbers of conflicts on the continent.

I would like to add some aspect of Norwegian policy to promote peace and reconciliation:

- **Ownership by the parties.** Norway assists parties to conflict in their efforts to find peaceful solutions, but the overall responsibility for the peace process always lies with the parties themselves. Sustainable peace can only be achieved if the parties themselves show a willingness to work towards a political solution, and Norway will never push solutions onto the parties.
- **A long-term willingness to provide assistance.** Many conflicts last for several decades, and it can take time before the parties are ready to negotiate a political solution. Norway has made it clear that it takes a long-term approach to its peace and reconciliation efforts.
- **A willingness to talk to all parties to a conflict.** Norway talks to all parties that are seeking a political solution. Norway's engagement in the Middle East, which involved entering into dialogue with Hamas at an early stage, is a good example in this context. Seeking to engage all parties helps build trust and enhances understanding of the underlying interests.
- **Acceptance of the risk of failure.** Norway accepts that there is a high risk of failure in this field. A number of unsuccessful attempts are often needed for a later attempt at negotiation to succeed.
- **Available resources.** Norway makes both human and financial resources available for peace and reconciliation efforts.
- **Networks and close cooperation with partners.** Norway does not work in a vacuum. Over time, Norway has built up a broad network of contacts, and Norwegian diplomats cooperate with these actors as appropriate. These contacts may be other actors involved in mediation, organisations working to promote dialogue and conflict resolution, think tanks, researchers, civil society actors, etc.
- **Experience and knowledge.** Norway has built up valuable experience and knowledge of peace processes through its long-term efforts in this area. At the same time, it is important to recognise that all conflicts are unique, and knowledge of the specific conflict and the region in question is vital.
- **Impartial facilitation.** When acting as facilitator in a peace process, Norway remains impartial. However, this does not mean that we are

neutral when it comes to values; in peace processes in which Norway is engaged, we work actively to promote the principles of international law and human rights – even in cases where this meets resistance from the parties.

- **Inclusive peace processes.** Peace processes that involve the civilian population, especially women and victims, create a greater sense of local ownership and result in better peace agreements. On several occasions, Norway has helped to ensure that women who would otherwise have been excluded from the process have had the opportunity to articulate their demands both at the negotiating table and in the implementation phase.

2. INTERNATIONAL LAW

We must uphold international law, including the principle of territorial integrity in all corners of the globe.

Norway consistently protests against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land. In fact we had a joint statement on May 11 Norway-South Africa on the anniversary of the killing of the Al Jazeera journalist Abuh Akleh.

That's also why we did not support the US-led intervention in Iraq in 2003.

Authoritarian regimes are on the rise – including in Europe. We must continue to stand up for human rights and freedoms worldwide. Here, Norway and South Africa work together, for example through our joint support to UN-resolutions on human rights defenders and combating racism.

South Africa is a long-standing champion in promoting diversity and women's rights. 15 years ago, our minister for children and equality was working to legalise same-sex marriage in Norway. She was told this would be difficult, as there was no precedent to lean on and learn from.

But two countries had already paved the way: namely South Africa and Spain. And in 2008, the Norwegian parliament passed the bill into law.

Today, attacking gender diversity is a core strategy for many authoritarian regimes. Both when it comes to women's liberation, and LGBTI rights. Such attacks are often the first sign of a country turning away from democracy.

3 Working with everybody

working across regional and geopolitical dividing lines produces results. This was our systematic approach during our two years as elected member of the Security Council.

- We helped secure a robust political mandate for the UN in Afghanistan.
- We helped extend the mandate for cross-border humanitarian aid to Syria three times, in partnership with Ireland.
- Together with Niger, we negotiated a ground-breaking resolution on the protection of education in armed conflict.
- And we partnered with Ghana on the first resolution on maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea in a decade. Just to mention a few.

Building upon South Africa's work, we promoted closer cooperation between the ten elected members of the Council.

We gave priority to maintaining close cooperation with all countries, and in particular the three African Council members. We will continue to push for increased African influence in the UN Security Council itself.

4. UNSC reform

To have the legitimacy needed to address today's challenges, we need a Council that is:

- more transparent
- more effective
- more representative
- and more accountable.

Progress on reform of the Security Council has been slow. The violation of the UN Charter by a permanent member of the Council only stresses the urgency of our reform efforts.

We were main sponsors of the veto initiative, adopted by the General Assembly last year. It has brought much needed transparency around the use of the veto. We must also reform the composition of the Council.

Such a large part of the Council's agenda is focused on issues related to the African continent. And yet - Africa has no permanent seat.

Norway supports expanding the Security Council to include both permanent and non-permanent seats for Africa. This is necessary to redress the historical injustice against Africa.

It is unacceptable that the continent is not only without representation in the permanent category, but also today, under-represented among elected members.

5. Impossible to talk about multilateralism without raising Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

The invasion is a blatant assault on the UN Charter and the rules-based order we have all committed to.

Kenya's ambassador to the UN conveyed precisely that message to the Security Council two days before Russia's invasion. Borders drawn based on a colonial past could have led to bloody wars in Africa, Ambassador Kimani said.

Further, he underlined:

“we chose to follow the rules of the Organisation of African Unity and the United Nations charter, not because our borders satisfied us, but because we wanted something greater, forged in peace.” End quote.

We are extremely concerned by evidence of war crimes committed in the areas that the Russians hold or have held in Ukraine. The Norwegian Chair of the UN Independent Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, Erik Møse, has made clear that there is documentation of sexual violence committed against victims in the age range of 4 to 82 years.

The war has devastating global consequences, with developing countries paying the highest price.

Countries might have differing assessments of the situation in Europe. But Norway is a neighbor. We know Russia. The USA did not provoke the invasion as some say. Far from it. It is a strange thing to say since Russia's border was never violated. But Russia invaded Georgian in 2008, Ukraine in 2014 and again in 2022.

Yesterday, Norway celebrated independence day. We celebrated our constitution from 1814, a cornerstone in our democracy. It was our democratic choice in 1949 when we joined NATO. Before the invasion of Ukraine, it became clear the Kremlin wanted to make an agreement that made it impossible for NATO to accept new members. This fundamentally undemocratic way of running Europe through the idea that might is right, that the big countries can deny other countries freedom and democracy, is unacceptable. The threat against Kremlin is not NATO, it is democracy. In democratic countries leaders have their mandate from the people through free and fair elections. Autocratic leaders are afraid of

democracy. Kremlin have less of a chance of pressing democratic countries. And Kremlin does not want democratic countries to choose to become NATO members. The Russian effort to limit democracy in Sweden and Finland backfired, especially when the population saw what was happening on February 22 last year.

Taking a stance on Russia's war in Ukraine is not about taking sides – geopolitically. It's about standing up for the UN Charter and principles that serve the best interest of all countries. We simply cannot accept that one permanent member of the UN Security Council invades its neighbour, a peaceful, sovereign and independent state.

It is also worth recalling that at independence, Ukraine gave up its nuclear arsenal – the world's third largest. Doing so, Ukraine was given reassurances for its sovereignty and internationally recognized borders. Russia signed that agreement in 1994, the Budapest memorandum.

That's why all states that want to prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons should stand with Ukraine.

I would like to add that we understand that the situation in Europe is far away from the political realities in other regions of the world. And at the same time as we ask for support for the principles that are at stake, we should listen to the concerns and questions from our partners in Africa.

And you are also suffering from the consequences of the conflict through higher food and energy prices. In 2022, Norway allocated more funding to humanitarian assistance and development aid than ever before. This is of course partly because of the humanitarian support to Ukraine. But we have also increased our humanitarian assistance to parts of the world as well.

We often hear that Europe only cares about Ukraine and not other conflicts. There are a couple of aspects to this issue that I will comment upon. If you look at CNN and BBC etc., there is a lot of reporting on Ukraine. I guess in all countries there are more focus on conflict closer than far away. In SA, there is more reporting and focus on the situation in Cabo Delgado in Northern Mozambique than on Sahel.

However, I would stress that Norway is very much engaged on conflict on this continent. Sudan is taking up a lot of time, always has. Somalia likewise. DRC;

close to 100 million USD in support every year. UNSC: we spent a lot of time on conflicts outside Europe.

6. Conclusion.

In times of rising tensions, it is tempting to prioritize domestic concerns before global solidarity. But it should be clear to us all, from both histories' long gone and the very recent past, that we are – in fact – our brother's keeper.

After decades of progress, the 2030 agenda is now in serious trouble. An expected 345.2 million people are projected to be food insecure this year – more than double the number in 2020.

It is imperative that we agree on how we can fast track sustainable development for all.

I very much look forward to our discussion. Thank you.